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PRESENTS

TSL AWARDS

TSL AWARDS
TSL AWARDS
TSL AWARDS

**THE TSL AWARD PRESENTED BY STILE II PROJECT FROM GIZ IS IMPLEMENTED
ON BEHALF OF THE GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ) AND WITH THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE**

ORGANISED BY:

Bangladesh
**BRAND
FORUM**
Inspiring the Nation





THE SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP (TSL) AWARD

The Sustainability Leadership (TSL) Award is a joint initiative of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and the German development agency GIZ, delivered under German Cooperation and presented at BAT EXPO 26 in partnership with the Bangladesh Brand Forum.

Bangladesh's garment industry has spent the last decade rebuilding its reputation from the ground up – through safer factories, stronger compliance, and a hard-won credibility that took years to earn. The TSL Award exists to make sure that progress is seen, understood, and celebrated, rather than taken for granted. It is a platform built specifically to find and honour the best sustainable practices across the country's readymade garment (RMG) and textile factories – recognising the frontrunners whose people-first workplaces, environmental leadership, innovation and resilience are quietly redefining what a modern factory can look like.

By honouring these factories, the TSL Award aims to do more than hand out trophies. It is a deliberate act of nation branding: strengthening the global image of "Made in Bangladesh" as modern, safe, and environmentally responsible, at a moment when buyers, regulators and consumers around the world are asking harder questions of where their clothes come from and how they are made. Every factory recognised through this Award becomes part of the answer to that question – proof, rather than promise, that sustainability and competitiveness can be the same ambition.

The Award also serves a purpose closer to home. For the workers whose safety and dignity are at the centre of the People First pillar, for the engineers and sustainability teams driving down water and waste in Planet Positive, for the innovators shaping what comes next in Next Frontier, and for the small and medium enterprises proving that scale is not a prerequisite for leadership in Rising Strength – the TSL Award is a rare moment of visibility for work that is usually done without applause. It gives the industry's most committed leaders a platform commensurate with the seriousness of what they have built.

Entries are judged across these four pillars, spanning worker welfare, environmental performance, innovation, and the achievements of small and medium enterprises. Every initiative passes through a rigorous, multi-stage Grand Jury process – nomination and submission, eligibility screening, initial category review, and a Grand Jury evaluation drawing on 20 to 25 experts across sustainability, academia, business, ESG and development – before Platinum, Gold and Silver honours are awarded.

This Award is a record of what excellence in sustainability actually looks like on the factory floor, judged on evidence rather than reputation – and a legacy the industry can build on, one factory, one initiative, and one honest achievement at a time.



CATEGORY 1

PEOPLE FIRST



Recognizing factories building Bangladesh's most worker-friendly workplaces, where safety, dignity, inclusion and opportunity are embedded in workplace practices and contribute to long-term business performance

1.1 MODEL FACTORY OF THE YEAR

Recognising a factory that demonstrates outstanding overall performance in workplace safety, infrastructure, worker facilities, factory layout, cleanliness and ergonomics, creating a modern, safe, healthy and worker-friendly working environment.

Assessment Criteria:

- Overall condition, maintenance and structural safety of the factory building
- Availability and validity of required licences, permits and approvals, including building, factory layout, environmental and fire safety approvals
- Adequacy of factory layout, including safe and efficient placement of machines and work areas
- Safe, clear and unobstructed passageways, aisles and emergency escape routes
- Adequacy and accessibility of staircases, emergency exits and evacuation arrangements
- Effective fire prevention, protection and emergency preparedness measures
- Electrical safety measures and regular inspection/maintenance
- Machine safety, including appropriate guarding and safe operating practices
- Safe storage, handling and management of chemicals and hazardous materials
- Adequate ventilation, cooling, lighting and noise control
- Good housekeeping, cleanliness and workplace hygiene
- Identification and reduction of ergonomic risks through workplace assessment and improvements
- Quality, availability and accessibility of worker facilities, including medical services, childcare/daycare, canteen, rest areas, drinking water and sanitation
- Effective and functional participation, safety and anti-harassment committees
- Proper segregation, handling and disposal of workplace waste
- Evidence of regular monitoring, corrective actions and continuous improvement in workplace safety and worker wellbeing



1.2 WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AWARD

Recognizing a factory that demonstrates measurable progress in advancing women from operational roles into supervisory, managerial and leadership positions while creating a safe, inclusive and supportive working environment.

Assessment Criteria:

- Gender equality policy and integration of gender equality into relevant company policies and practices
- Employee and management data by gender (e.g., workforce composition, positions, training and promotions)
- Measures to identify and address gender pay gaps, where applicable
- Percentage and year-on-year progression of women in supervisory, management and leadership positions
- Representation of women in factory committees and other decision-making structures
- Skills development, mentoring, career development and leadership programmes for women
- Equal opportunities and encouragement for women to participate in training, career advancement and leadership programmes
- Transparent and fair performance appraisal, promotion and career progression systems
- Maternity protection, return-to-work support and childcare/daycare facilities
- Effective anti-harassment policy, committee and confidential complaint-handling mechanism
- Measures to ensure a safe, respectful, inclusive and women-friendly working environment
- Evidence of women workers progressing to higher-level positions through the factory's initiatives
- Participation in or implementation of recognised women empowerment initiatives and programmes
- Evidence of measurable outcomes and continuous improvement in women's participation and advancement





1.3 COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Recognising a factory that has made a meaningful and sustained contribution to the wellbeing and development of the communities surrounding its operations through relevant social initiatives.

Assessment Criteria:

- Community healthcare, medical support and health-awareness programmes
- Education, scholarships and support for students and educational institutions
- Skills development, vocational training and employment-related initiatives
- Entrepreneurship, livelihood development and income-generation programmes
- Support for local infrastructure and community facilities, such as roads, schools and other essential facilities
- Initiatives supporting access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene
- Community emergency preparedness, disaster response or other relevant support initiatives
- Support for vulnerable groups, low-income families and other community members in need
- Regular engagement and collaboration with local communities and relevant organisations
- Involvement of community members in identifying needs, designing and implementing initiatives
- Number of beneficiaries, duration and consistency of the initiative
- Evidence of measurable outcomes and positive impact on the community
- Long-term sustainability and potential for the initiative to continue delivering benefits
- Clear alignment between the initiative and the identified needs and priorities of the local community



PLANET POSITIVE



Recognising factories that demonstrate strong environmental performance through responsible resource use, pollution prevention, waste reduction, climate action and continuous improvement, while supporting efficient and competitive production.

2.1 SUSTAINABILITY LEADER OF THE YEAR

Recognising a factory that demonstrates strong and integrated environmental performance across energy, water, waste, chemicals, emissions and resource efficiency, supported by effective management systems and measurable improvements.

Assessment Criteria:

- Effective environmental management system, policies, responsibilities and monitoring mechanisms
- Relevant environmental certifications and recognised sustainability programmes, where applicable
- Sustainable production practices and responsible use of natural resources
- Energy-efficiency measures and use of renewable energy, including solar energy, where applicable
- Reduction in energy consumption and energy use per unit of production
- Water-efficiency measures, responsible water use and reduction in water consumption
- Waste reduction, segregation, reuse, recycling and environmentally responsible disposal
- Effective management, storage and safe handling of chemicals and hazardous materials
- Use of safer chemicals, sustainable production inputs and improved chemical management practices
- Effective control and reduction of air emissions and greenhouse gas emissions
- Measurement and monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions, including Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions and, where relevant, Scope 3 emissions
- Adoption of resource-efficient technologies, processes and equipment
- Digital or automated monitoring of energy, water, steam and other relevant environmental parameters, where applicable
- Clearly defined environmental targets and evidence of year-on-year improvement





- Environmental investments and initiatives that have resulted in measurable environmental and/or business benefits
- Evidence of continuous improvement in overall environmental performance

2.2 WATER GUARDIAN

Recognising a factory that demonstrates significant and sustained improvement in water efficiency, responsible water use, wastewater management and water conservation through effective practices, technologies and measurable results.

Assessment Criteria:

- Year-on-year reduction in total water consumption
- Water consumption per unit of production and evidence of improvement over time
- Clear water-use baseline, targets and monitoring system
- Measures to reduce water consumption through improved processes, technologies and production practices
- Use of water-efficient machinery, processes and chemicals, where applicable
- Water recycling and reuse within factory operations
- Effective wastewater and effluent treatment and management
- Compliance with applicable wastewater discharge requirements and effective management of treated wastewater
- Use of Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) or other advanced wastewater treatment systems, where appropriate
- Rainwater harvesting and reuse
- Recovery and reuse of hot water, condensate and other suitable water streams
- Installation and use of water meters, sub-meters and/or digital monitoring systems
- Identification and reduction of water losses, leaks and unnecessary consumption
- Evidence of measurable environmental and/or financial benefits resulting from water-efficiency initiatives
- Evidence of continuous improvement in water management and conservation





2.3 CIRCULAR TEXTILE PIONEER

Recognising a factory that demonstrates leadership in reducing textile waste and advancing circular production through the reuse, recycling and recovery of textile materials, supported by practical, traceable and measurable solutions.

Assessment Criteria:

- Clear policy, procedures and targets for textile waste reduction, reuse and recycling
- Application of the 3R approach: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle
- Quantity and percentage of textile waste reduced, reused, recycled, or otherwise prevented from going to landfill
- Quantity of textile waste, such as fabric scraps and cutting waste, recycled or reused over a defined period
- Use of recycled fibres, yarns or other recycled materials in production
- Effective partnerships with recyclers, suppliers or other organisations supporting circular textile solutions
- Traceability of textile waste from collection through recycling, reuse or final processing
- Circular recycling initiatives that recover textile waste and use the recovered materials to produce new products
- Use of digital or other systems to monitor and track textile waste and recycled materials, where applicable
- Measurable reduction in the use of virgin raw materials through circular practices
- Environmental and/or financial benefits achieved through waste reduction, reuse and recycling
- Evidence of continuous improvement in textile waste management and circular production
- Potential for the solution to be adopted by other factories and expanded to a larger scale



CATEGORY 3

NEXT FRONTIER



Recognizing commercial, technological, environmental and human-centred innovations that are shaping the future of Bangladesh's textile and RMG industry.

3.1 BUSINESS INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR

Recognising a factory that has introduced an innovative product, design, process, technology or business solution that has created clear and measurable improvements in business performance.

Assessment Criteria:

- Introduction of innovative products, product features or new product concepts
- Innovation in product design, materials or production methods
- Improvements in production processes, workflow or operational practices
- Introduction or effective use of new technologies, machinery or equipment
- Digitalisation, automation or smart manufacturing solutions
- Reduction in production costs or operating costs
- Improvement in productivity, production capacity or resource efficiency
- Reduction in production or delivery lead time
- Improvement in product quality, consistency or production efficiency
- Reduction of defects, rework, downtime or production losses
- Development of new markets, products, customers or business opportunities
- Improved customer satisfaction, competitiveness or market access
- Demonstrated financial benefits, cost savings or return on investment
- Clear evidence of the problem or business need addressed by the innovation
- Level of innovation and uniqueness compared with existing practices within the factory or industry
- Practicality and effectiveness of the solution in achieving the intended results
- Potential for further expansion within the factory or across other production lines
- Potential for adoption by other factories in the textile and RMG industry
- Evidence of sustained results and continuous improvement



3.2 *FUTURE-READY AWARD*

Recognising a factory that has introduced innovative solutions, technologies or practices that strengthen its readiness for emerging environmental, technological, market and regulatory developments.

Assessment Criteria:

- Circular economy practices, resource efficiency and waste reduction
- Climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience measures
- Renewable energy and low-carbon production solutions
- Digitalisation, automation and smart manufacturing
- Digital monitoring of energy, water, steam and other relevant production or environmental parameters
- Data-driven environmental performance monitoring and decision-making
- Sustainable materials, technologies, machinery and production processes
- Safer and more sustainable chemical management and alternatives
- Relevant sustainability standards, certifications or verified sustainable inputs
- Preparedness for emerging EU and international sustainability and market requirements, including CSDDD and DPP
- Improved product traceability, transparency and sustainability-related data management
- Contribution to long-term business resilience, competitiveness and international market access
- Demonstrated environmental, operational, financial or market benefits
- Potential for expansion within the factory and adoption by other factories
- Long-term relevance and potential to support the factory's future sustainability and competitiveness





3.3 WORKER-CENTRIC INNOVATION

Recognising a factory that has introduced an innovative solution that has made a direct and measurable contribution to worker safety, health, wellbeing, dignity or working conditions.

Assessment Criteria:

- Innovative measures to improve worker safety and reduce occupational risks
- Improved access to healthcare, health services and worker wellbeing support
- Transportation facilities or other measures that improve workers' safety and convenience
- Nutritious food, subsidised meals or other initiatives supporting workers' wellbeing
- Accident, health or other appropriate insurance coverage
- Maternity protection, return-to-work support and childcare facilities
- Health and wellbeing initiatives addressing the specific needs of women workers
- Inclusive recruitment and workplace support for persons with disabilities
- Fair-price shops and other initiatives addressing workers' cost-of-living needs
- Provision of affordable sanitary products and appropriate disposal facilities
- Support for workers' children through scholarships, stipends or other initiatives
- Fair and responsible production or performance-based incentive systems
- Digital or technology-based solutions that improve worker safety, wellbeing or access to services
- Worker participation in the design, implementation and improvement of the innovation
- Evidence of worker use, acceptance, satisfaction and measurable positive outcomes
- Potential for the innovation to be sustained, expanded or adopted by other factories



CATEGORY 4

RIISING STRENGTH

Recognising small and medium-sized factories that demonstrate meaningful progress and leadership in sustainability, innovation and responsible business, despite limited resources.

4.1 SMALL FACTORY, BIG IMPACT AWARD

Recognising an SME that demonstrates strong sustainability performance and meaningful impact relative to its size and available resources.

Assessment Criteria:

- Workplace safety, worker wellbeing and responsible employment practices
- Environmental performance, resource efficiency and pollution prevention
- Social responsibility and community initiatives
- Responsible business practices and effective management systems
- Effective and efficient use of available financial, technical and human resources
- Measurable sustainability improvements achieved through practical and cost-effective solutions
- Balanced performance across social, environmental and business areas
- Management commitment and active employee participation
- Evidence of continuous improvement and sustained results
- Innovation and practical solutions suited to the factory's size and resources
- Potential to serve as a practical and replicable model for other SMEs

4.2 RESOURCEFUL INNOVATOR AWARD

Recognising an SME that has developed and implemented an innovative, practical and cost-effective solution despite limited financial, technical or human resources.

Assessment Criteria:

- Product, process, technology or workplace innovation
- Innovation and originality considering the factory's available resources
- Cost-effective and resource-efficient approach
- Measurable improvements in productivity, cost, safety, environmental performance or worker wellbeing



- Effective use of locally available knowledge, skills, technology or resources
- Practicality, feasibility and ease of implementation
- Efficient use of available financial, technical and human resources
- Potential for replication and adoption by other SMEs
- Sustainability of the solution beyond the initial implementation

4.3 GROWING RESPONSIBLY AWARD

Recognising an SME that has demonstrated measurable and sustained progress in sustainability, responsible business practices and continuous improvement over the past 12–24 months.

Assessment Criteria:

- Measurable progress over the previous 12–24 months against a clear baseline
- Improvements in workplace safety, worker wellbeing and working conditions
- Improvements in energy, water, waste, emissions and resource efficiency
- Progress in management systems, compliance and responsible business practices
- Evidence of continuous and sustained improvement rather than a one-time initiative or certification
- Management commitment and employee participation in improvement activities
- Investments in people, systems, technology or infrastructure to support improvement
- Clear sustainability targets, action plans and monitoring of progress
- Evidence of measurable environmental, social or business benefits
- Potential to maintain, expand and further improve the results achieved





AWARDS

JURY PROCESS

1. NOMINATION & SUBMISSION

RMG & Textile companies are eligible to submit their initiatives against the relevant categories. Entries include the prescribed presentation, supporting evidence, initiative AV and NOC.

2. ELIGIBILITY & COMPLIANCE SCREENING

The organising team checks whether:

- **The entry is complete.**
- **The initiative fits the selected category.**
- **Required documentation is provided.**
- **Claims have supporting evidence.**
- **NOC and other mandatory materials are submitted.**
- **Incomplete or non compliant entries may be disqualified.**

3. INITIAL JURY / CATEGORY SCREENING

Eligible entries undergo an initial evaluation. The objective is to identify the strongest initiatives within each category based on the prescribed evaluation criteria.

This is important because the process is not simply a popularity or brand size contest. The initiative itself is what is evaluated.

4. GRAND JURY EVALUATION

The shortlisted entries move to the Grand Jury Sessions.

For 2026, there will be two or three jury panels, comprising 20 to 25 experts from diverse industries.

The jurors will include sustainability specialists, academics, business leaders, ESG professionals, development sector experts and marketing and strategy professionals.



Each Grand Jury reviews the shortlisted initiatives and assesses:

- **Category relevance**
- **Category contribution**
- **Innovation**
- **Implementation**
- **Measurable impact**
- **Scalability**
- **Long term value**
- **Credibility of evidence**

The 2026 Grand Jury is explicitly described as the final stage of the evaluation process.

5. JURY DELIBERATION & FINAL SELECTION

Jurors discuss and assess the competing initiatives before arriving at the final decisions. The intention is to make the process transparent, accountable and unbiased, with expertise from different sectors bringing different perspectives to the evaluation.

This multi panel approach was also used in 2023, when 31 experts participated across seven Grand Jury panels.

6. WINNERS & HONOURABLE MENTIONS

The final jury decisions determine the winners across the four award categories, with three award levels:

- **PLATINUM**
- **GOLD**
- **SILVER**



TSL AWARDS

A LEGACY OF **EXCELLENCE**
A FUTURE OF **INNOVATION**

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